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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN UN PERMREP CHURKIN CRITICIZES GEORGIAN
ACTIONS ON ABKHAZIA

11. (SBU) Summary: In April 14 Security Council consultations on the Secretary-General's quarterly report on the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), A/SYG Edmund Mulet reported that the situation in UNOMIG's area of responsibility has remained generally calm with the exception of recent incidents including Georgian overflights. Mulet said it is unlikely that UNOMIG will be able to enhance its observational capacity as soon as it had hoped. He welcomed Georgian President Saakashvili's March 28 proposal. Russian Permrep Churkin called the Abkhazia peace process "frozen" because of Georgian non-implementation of obligations related to the Moscow Agreement. Churkin criticized Georgian actions in the Upper Kodori Valley and Georgia's patriotic youth camp. USUN welcomed the Georgian President's initiatives for resolution of the Abkhazia conflict, expressed regret regarding the recent Russian unilateral withdrawal from 1996 CIS sanctions, and voiced concern vis-a-vis recent press reports that Russia is considering a change in its relationship with the Abkhaz. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In April 14 Security Council consultations on the Secretary-General's quarterly report on UNOMIG, A/SYG Mulet

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reported that the situation in UNOMIG's area of responsibility has remained generally calm in the previous three months with the exception of a few recent incidents including "an overflight by two Georgian pilots on April 5." Mulet said that the 1994 Moscow Agreement (on cease-fire and separation of forces) must be respected in the air as well as on the ground, as breaches of it could endanger civil traffic and UNOMIG operations. He stated that UNOMIG cannot confirm Abkhaz accusations of a buildup of Georgian forces in the Zugdidi or the Upper Kodori Valley regions of Georgia.

13. (SBU) According to Mulet, it is unlikely that UNOMIG will be able to enhance its observational capacity as soon as it had hoped because both the Abkhaz and Georgian sides are reluctant to cooperate. Mulet welcomed Georgian President Saakashvili's March 28 proposal to the Abkhaz side, saying he hoped the Abkhaz will engage. Mulet commented that the absolute security guarantees Saakashvili had offered in his proposal as part of a final settlement were constructive, but said "more stability and security would improve the prospect for dialogue already now." Mulet reported that the final phase of the UN review of the Abkhazia peace process is beginning soon, saying the UN will seek the views of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Mulet hoped the two sides will implement soon the confidence building measures agreed to in Geneva in February 2007.

Russian Statement: Georgia To Blame For Frozen Peace Process

¶4. (SBU) Russian Permrep Churkin charged that the Abkhazia peace process is "frozen" because of the "non-implementation of obligations related to the Moscow Agreement included in UN Security Council resolutions 1716, 1751 and 1781." Churkin called Georgian actions regarding the Upper Kodori Valley "the main problem," adding that the situation is complicated by Georgia's patriotic youth camp. Churkin protested that the Georgian side provoked an incident with Russian CIS peacekeepers at the camp in October 2007 and recently turned the camp into a military base. Churkin criticized Georgian UAV overflights of Abkhazia as "a violation of the Moscow Agreement and a serious provocation," arguing that overflights could precede the use of force. He called for a prompt signing of the agreement on the non-use of force and return of refugees.

¶5. (SBU) Churkin justified Russia's March withdrawal from 1996 CIS sanctions, claiming "most Georgians have returned to Gali" and asserting that "the Abkhaz people will be faced with negative consequences without lifting of the sanctions." Regarding Saakashvili's recent proposal, Churkin complained that it contained "no new ideas" and is a mere rephrasing of the 2006 Roadmap that the Georgian side announced to the media instead of presenting first to the Abkhaz. Churkin said that under Saakashvili's proposal the Abkhaz veto would be limited, the special economic zone would "apply only to Gali" and "the attempt to return the approach of a federal system that had been used before Saakashvili would not be supported by Georgian society."

U.S. Statement: Concern With Russian Actions And Possible Actions

¶6. (SBU) In the U.S. statement Political Minister-Counselor welcomed the Georgian President's initiatives for resolution

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of the conflict and encouraged the sides to implement without delay confidence building measures. He stated that the return of IDPs to Abkhazia has remained frozen. He also expressed regret regarding the recent Russian decision to withdraw unilaterally from 1996 CIS sanctions and noted U.S. concern vis-a-vis recent press reports that Russia is considering a change in its relationship with the Abkhaz.

Statements By Other Council Members

¶7. (SBU) Chinese Deputy Permrep Liu expressed support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and commended Georgia for its new proposal. French Deputy Permrep Lacroix underscored the importance of enhancing UNOMIG's observational capacity and expressed concern regarding lack of progress on return of IDPs. UK Deputy Permrep Pierce praised Saakashvili's proposal to the Abkhaz and called on both sides to implement agreed confidence building measures. Croatian Permrep Jurica expressed support for the territorial integrity and independence of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Jurica also stressed the importance that the IDPs be able to return quickly to Abkhazia.

Khalilzad